

# The Gable Window

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# THE GABLE WINDOW

## I

I moved into my cousin Wilbur's home less than a month after his untimely death, not without misgivings, for its isolation in a pocket of the hills off the Aylesbury Pike was not to my liking. Yet I moved with a sense of fitness that this haven of my favorite cousin should have descended to me. As the old Wharton place, the house had been untenanted for many years. It had fallen into disuse after the grandson of the farmer who had built it had left the soil for the seaside city of Kingston, and my cousin had bought it from the estate of that heir disgruntled with the meager living to be made on that sadly depleted land. It was not a calculated move, for the Akeleyes did nothing but by sudden impulse.

Wilbur had been for many years a student of archeology and anthropology. He had been graduated from Miskatonic University in Arkham, and immediately following his graduation, had spent three years in Mongolia, Tibet, and Sinkiang Province, followed by an equal number of years divided among South and Central America, and the southwestern part of the United States. He had come home to reply in person to an offer to join the staff of Miskatonic University, but instead, he had bought the old Wharton farm, and set about to remodel it, tearing down all but one of the outbuildings, and imposing upon the central structure an even more curious shape than it had gathered to itself in the course of the twenty decades it had been standing. Indeed, the extent of these alterations was not fully apparent to me until I myself took possession of the house.

It was then that I learned that Wilbur had retained unaltered only one face of the old house, that he had completely rebuilt the front and one side, and had erected a gable room over the south wing of the ground floor. The house had originally been a low building, of but one storey, with a large attic, which had in its time been hung with all the impedimenta of the rural life in New England. In part, it had been constructed of logs; and some of

this construction had been carefully retained by Wilbur, which was testimony to my cousin's respect for the handiwork of our forebears in this country, for the Akeley family had been in America fully two hundred years when Wilbur had decided to foreswear his wanderings and settle in his native milieu. The year, as I recall it, was 1921; he had lived but three years thereafter, so that it was 1924—on April 16—that I took possession of the house in accordance with the terms of his will.

The house was still very much as he left it, an anomaly in the New England landscape, for, though it still bore the marks of its ancestry in its stone foundations and the logs of its substructure, as well as in the square stone chimney which rose from its fireplaces, it had been so much altered as to seem a product of several generations. Though the majority of these alterations had apparently been made to contribute to Wilbur's comfort, there was one change which had baffled me at the time that Wilbur had made it, and for which he never offered any explanation; this was the installation in the south wall of his gable room of a great round window of a most curious clouded glass, of which he said only that it was a work of great antiquity, which he had discovered and acquired in the course of his travels in Asia. He referred to it at one time as "the glass from Leng" and at another as "possibly Hyadean in origin," neither of which enlightened me in the slightest, though, to tell the truth, I was not sufficiently interested in my cousin's vagaries to press inquiries.

I soon wished, however, that I had done so, for I discovered rapidly, once I had taken up my existence in the building, that my cousin's entire living seemed to revolve not about the central rooms of the house on the ground floor, which one might have expected, since these were appointed for maximum effect and comfort, but about the south gable room, for it was here that he kept his rack of pipes, his favorite books, records, and most comfortable pieces of furniture, and it was here that he worked on such manuscripts pertinent to his studies as he had in progress at the time that he was struck down with a coronary ailment while he was at work in the stacks of Miskatonic University Library.

That some adjustment between what had been his regimen and what was mine would have to be made, I knew; and it must be made in my favor. It

seemed, therefore, that the first order of business was a restoration of the rightful way of existence in the house, a resumption of life on the ground floor, for, to tell the truth, I found myself from the beginning curiously repelled by the gable room, in part certainly because it reminded me so strongly of the living presence of my dead cousin who could never again occupy his favorite corner of the house, in part also because the room was to me unnaturally alien and seemed cold to me, holding me off as by some physical force I could not understand, though this was surely consistent with my attitude about the room, for I could understand it no more than I ever really understood my cousin Wilbur.

The alteration I wished to bring about, however, was not as easily accomplished as I had hoped it might be, for I was soon aware that my cousin's old "den" cast an aura over the entire house. There are those who hold that houses inevitably assume something of the character of their owners; if the old house had worn any of the characteristics of the Whartons, who had lived in it for so long, it was certain that my cousin had effectively obliterated them when he remodeled the house, for now it seemed often literally to speak of Wilbur Akeley's presence. It was not often an obtrusive feeling—only rather an uneasy conviction I experienced of being no longer alone, or of being watched, under some scrutiny, the source of which was not known to me.

Perhaps it was the very isolation of the house which was responsible for this fancy, but it came to seem to me that my cousin's favorite room was like something alive, waiting on his return, like an animal unaware that death had intervened and the master for whom it waited would not again come back. Perhaps because of this obsession, I gave the room more attention than in fact it deserved. I had removed from it certain articles, such as a very comfortable lounging chair; but I was curiously impelled to bring them back, out of compulsions which arose from different and often conflicting convictions—the fancy that this chair, for instance, which at first proved to be so comfortable, was made for someone of a different shape from my own, and thus was uncomfortable to my person, or the belief that the light was not as good downstairs as above, which was responsible for my returning to the gable room the books I had removed from it.

The fact was, undeniably, that the character of the gable room was subtly at variance with that of the remainder of the house. My cousin's home was in every way prosaic enough, except for that one room in the south gable. The ground floor of the house was filled with creature comforts, but gave little evidence of having been extensively used, save for that room given over to the preparation of food. In contrast, the gable room, while also comfortable, was comfortable in a different way, difficult to explicate; it was as if the room, manifestly a "den" built by one man for his use, had been used by many different kinds of people, each of whom left something of himself within these walls, without, however, any identifying mark. Yet I knew that my cousin had lived the life of a recluse, save for his journeys to the Miskatonic at Arkham and the Widener Library in Boston. He had gone nowhere else, he had received no callers, and even, on the rare occasions when I stopped at his home—as an accountant I did sometimes find myself in his vicinity—he seemed always willing that I be gone, though he was unfailingly courteous, and though I never remained longer than fifteen minutes at most.

Truth to tell, the aura of the gable room diminished my resolve. The lower floor was ample for my purposes; it afforded me a commodious home, and it was easy to put the gable room and the alterations I hoped to make in it out of my mind, to defer and postpone it until it came to seem too minor a matter to trouble about. Moreover, I was still frequently away for days and nights at a time, and there was nothing pressing I needed to do about the house. My cousin's will had been probated, the estate had been settled, and no one challenged my possession.

All might have been well, for, with my resolve put by, I was much less aware of my unfinished plans for the gable room, had it not been for the succession of little incidents which occurred to disturb me. These were of no consequence at first; they began as tiny, almost unnoticed things. I believe that the first of them took place when I had been in possession scarcely a month, and it was such an infinitesimal thing that it did not occur to me to connect it to the later events I experienced until many weeks had gone by. It happened one night when I sat reading before my fireplace in the ground-floor living-room, and it was surely nothing more, I was certain, than a cat or some similar animal scratching at the door to be let in. Yet it

was so distinct that I got up and made the rounds, from the front door to the back, and even to a little side door which was a relic of the oldest part of the house, but I could find neither cat nor trace of one. The animal had vanished into the darkness. I called to it several times, but it neither replied nor made any other sound. Yet I had no sooner seated myself again before the scratching began anew. No matter how I tried, I failed utterly to catch any sight of the cat, though I was disturbed in this fashion fully half a dozen times, until I was so upset that, had I caught sight of the cat, I would probably have shot it.

Of itself, this was an incident so trivial that no one would think twice about it. Could it not have been a cat familiar with my late cousin, and unfamiliar enough with me to be frightened away by my appearance? Indeed, it could. I thought no more of it. However, in less than a week, a similar incident took place, differing in one marked exception to the first. This time, instead of there being the clawing or scratching of a cat, there was a slithering, groping sound that sent a chill of apprehension through me, just as if a giant snake or an elephant's trunk were moving along the glass of the windows and doors. The pattern of its sounding and my reactions was exactly similar. I heard, but saw nothing; I listened, but could find nothing—only the intangible sounds. A cat, a snake? What more?

But there was yet more, quite apart from the occasions on which the cat or the snake seemed to have returned for another try. There was the time when I heard what sounded like hoof beats, or the tramping of some gigantic animal, or the twittering of birds pecking at the windows, or the slithering of some vast body, or the sucking sounds of lips or suckers. What was I to make of all this? I considered hallucination, and dismissed it as an explanation, for the sounds occurred in all kinds of weather and at all hours of the night and day, so that, had there actually been an animal of any size at door or window, I should certainly have caught sight of it before it vanished into the wooded hills which rose on all sides of the house, for the fields had long since been reclaimed by new growths of poplar, birch, and ash trees.

This mysterious cycle might never have been interrupted if I had not chanced one evening to open the stair door leading up to the gable room, on account of the heat of the ground floor; for it was then, when the clawing of

a cat came once more, that I realized the sound came not from one of the doors, but from the window in the gable room. I bounded up the stairs in unthinking haste, never stopping to realize that it would have been a remarkable cat indeed which could or would climb to the second floor of the house and demand entrance through the round window, which was the only opening into the room from outside. And, since the window did not open, either in whole or in part, and, since it was clouded glass, I saw nothing, even though I stood there and continued to hear, just as close by as the other side of the glass, the sounds made by the cat clawing the glass.

I raced downstairs, snatched up a powerful flashlight, and went out into the hot summer night to throw a beam of light to the side wall in which the window stood. But now all sound had ceased, and now there was nothing whatsoever to be seen but the bland house wall and the equally bland window, which looked as black from the outside as it looked like clouded white from within. I might have remained forever baffled—and often I think it would surely have been for the best had it been so—but it was not meant to be.

It was at about this time that I received from an elderly aunt a prized cat named Little Sam, which had been a pet of mine as a kitten two years before. My aunt had fretted about my insistence on living alone, and had finally sent along one of her cats to keep me company. Little Sam now belied his name; he ought to have been called “Big Sam,” for he had added pounds since I last saw him, and he was in every way a fierce, tawny feline, a credit to his species. But, while Little Sam rubbed me with affection, he was of two minds about the house. There were times when he slept in comfort and ease on the hearth; there were others when he was like a cat possessed, demanding to be out. And, at such times as the curious sounds as of some other animal seeking entry were to be heard, Little Sam was virtually mad with fear and fury, and I had to let him out of the house at once, whereat he would streak to the one outbuilding left after my cousin’s remodeling was done, and there he would spend the night—there or in the woods, and not come out again until dawn, when hunger drove him back to the house. And into the gable room he absolutely refused to set foot!



## II

It was the cat, in fact, which was responsible for my decision to probe a little deeper into my cousin's work, since Little Sam's antics were so manifestly genuine that I had no recourse but to seek, among the scattered papers my cousin had left, some explanation for the phenomena so common to the house. Almost at once I came upon an unfinished letter in the drawer of a desk in one of the downstairs rooms; it was addressed to me, and it was apparent that Wilbur must have been aware of his coronary condition, for I saw at a glance that the letter was meant to be one of those instructions in case of death, though Wilbur was clearly not cognizant of how short his time was to be, for the letter had been begun only about a month before his death, and, once pushed into the drawer, had not been taken up again, though ample time had been afforded him in which to finish it.

"Dear Fred," he wrote, "The best medical authorities tell me I have not long to live, and, since I have already set down in my will that you are to be my heir, I want to supplement that document now with a few final instructions, which I adjure you not to dismiss and want you to carry out faithfully. There are specifically three things you must do without fail, as follows:

"1) All my papers in drawers A, B, and C of my filing cabinet are to be destroyed.

"2) All books on shelves H, I, J, and K are to be turned over to the library of Miskatonic University at Arkham.

"3) The round glass window in the gable room upstairs is to be broken. It is not to be simply removed and disposed of elsewhere, but it must be shattered.

"You must accept my decision that these things must be done, or you may ultimately be responsible for loosing a terrible scourge upon the world. I



shall say no more of this, for there are other matters of which I wish to write here while I am still able to do so. One of these is the question

”

But here my cousin had been interrupted and left his letter.

What was I to make of these strange instructions? I could understand that his books ought to go to the Miskatonic Library, since I had no especial interest in them. But why destroy his papers? Should they not also go there? And as for the glass—its destruction was surely a piece of wanton folly, since it would entail a new window and thus additional expense. This fragment of a letter had the unfortunate effect of whetting my curiosity even farther, and I determined to look into his things with more attention.

That very evening I began with the books on the designated shelves, which were all in the south gable room upstairs. My cousin's interest in archaeological and anthropological subjects was clearly reflected in his choice of books, for he possessed many texts related to the civilizations of the Polynesians, the Easter Islanders, the Mongolians, and various primitive peoples, as well as books about the migrations of peoples and the cult-and myth-patterns of primitive religions. These, however, were but a prelude to his shelves of books designated for disposal to the university library, for some of these appeared to be fabulously old, so old, in fact, that they bore no dates, and must have descended, to judge from their appearance and their written characters, from medieval times. The more recent ones among them—and none of these dated beyond 1850—had been assembled from various places; some had belonged to our fathers' cousin, Henry Akeley, of Vermont, who had sent them down to Wilbur; some bore the ownership stamps of the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris, suggesting that Wilbur had not been above abstracting them from the shelves.

These books were in various languages; they bore titles such as Pnakotic Manuscripts, the R' lyeh Text, the Unaussprechlichen Kulten of von Junzt, the Book of Eibon, the Dhol Chants, the Seven Cryptical Books of Hsan, Ludvig Prinn's De Vermis Mysteriis, the Celaeno Fragments, the Cultes des Goules of the Comte d' Erlette, the Book of Dzyan, a photostat copy of the

Necronomicon, by an Arabian, Abdul Alhazred, and many others, some of them apparently in manuscript form. I confess that these books baffled me, for they were filled—such of them as I could read—with an incredible lore of myths and legends, related beyond question to the ancient, primitive religious beliefs of the race—and, if I could read it correctly, of other and alien races as well. Of course, I could not hope to do justice to the Latin, French, and German texts; it was difficult enough to read the old English of some of the manuscripts and books. In any case, I soon lost patience with this task, for the books postulated a belief so bizarre that only an anthropologist would be likely to give enough credence to it to amass so much literature on the subject.

Yet it was not uninteresting, though it represented a familiar pattern. It was the old credo of the force of light against the force of darkness, or at least, so I took it to be. Did it matter whether you called it God and the Devil, or the Elder Gods and the Ancient Ones, Good and Evil or such names as the Nodens, Lord of the Great Abyss, the only named Elder God, or these of the Great Old Ones—the idiot god, Azathoth, that amorphous blight of nethermost confusion which blasphemes and bubbles at the center of all infinity; Yog-Sothoth, the all-in-one and one-in-all, subject to neither the laws of time nor of space, co-existent with all time and coterminous with space; Nyarlathotep, the messenger of the Ancient Ones; Great Cthulhu, waiting to rise again from hidden R' lyeh in the depths of the sea; the unspeakable Hastur, Lord of the Interstellar Spaces; Shub-Niggurath, the black goat of the woods with a thousand young? And, just as the races of men who worshipped various known gods bore sectarian names, so did the followers of the Ancient Ones, and they included the Abominable Snow Men of the Himalayas and other Asian mountain regions; the Deep Ones, who lurked in the ocean depths to serve Great Cthulhu, though ruled by Dagon; the Shantaks; the Tcho-Tcho people; and many others, some of whom were said to stem from the places to which the Ancient Ones had been banished—as was Lucifer from Eden—when once they revolted against the Elder Gods—such places as the distant stars of the Hyades, Unknown Kadath, the Plateau of Leng, the sunken city of R' lyeh.

Throughout all this, there were two disturbing notes which suggested that my cousin took this myth-pattern more seriously than I had thought. The

repeated reference to the Hyades, for instance, reminded me that Wilbur had spoken of the glass in the gable window as “possibly Hyadean in origin.” Even more specifically, he had referred to it as “the glass from Leng.” It is true that these references might have been coincidental, and for a while I took comfort in telling myself that “Leng” might well be some Chinese dealer in antiques, and the word “Hyadean” might readily have been misunderstood. Yet this was a mere pretense on my part, for there was indeed everything to show that Wilbur had had more than a passing interest in this utterly alien mythos. If his possession of the books and manuscripts themselves were not enough, his notes left me in no doubt whatsoever.

For there were in his notes far more than strange references, which I found oddly disturbing; there were crude, yet effective drawings of shockingly outré settings and alien creatures, such beings as I could never, in my wildest dreams, have conceived. Indeed, for the most part, the creatures beggared description; they were winged, bat-like beings of the size of a man; they were vast, amorphous bodies, hung with tentacles, looking at first glance octopoid, but very definitely far more intelligent than an octopus; they were clawed half-man, half-bird creatures; they were horrible, batrachian-faced things walking erect, with scaled arms and a hue of pale green, like sea-water. There were also more recognizable human beings, however distorted—stunted and dwarfed Orientals living in a cold place, to judge by their attire, and a race born of miscegenation, with certain characteristics of the batrachian beings, yet unmistakably human. I had never dreamed that my cousin was possessed of such imagination; I had long known that Uncle Henry was convinced of the most patently imagined delusions, but no taint had ever shown in Wilbur, to my knowledge; I saw now, however, that he had skillfully concealed from all of us the essentials of his true nature, and I was more than a little astonished at this revelation.

For certainly no living creature could ever have served as models for his drawings, and there were no such illustrations in the manuscripts and books which he had left behind. Moved by my curiosity, I delved deeper and deeper into his notes, and finally put aside certain cryptic references which seemed, however remotely, to bear upon my immediate quest, arranging them into a sequence, which was easy, for all were dated.

“Oct. 15, ' 21. Landscape coming clearer. Leng? Suggestive of southwestern America. Caves filled with hordes of bats which begin to come out—like a dense cloud—just before sundown, blot out the sun. Low shrub growth, twisted trees. A place of much wind. Snowcapped mountains in distance, right, along the rim of the desert region.

“Oct. 21, ' 21. Four Shantaks mid-scene. Average height exceeding that of a man. Furred, bat-like bodies, bat wings, extending three feet above head. Face beaked, vulture-like, but otherwise resembling bat. Crossed landscape in flight, pausing to rest on crag in middle distance. Not aware. Did one have a rider? Cannot be sure.

“Nov. 7, ' 21. Night. Ocean. A reef-like island in the foreground. Deep Ones together with humans of partly similar origin; hybrid white. Deep Ones scaled, walk with frog-like gait, a cross between a hop and a step, somewhat hunched, too, as most batrachia. Others seem to have swum to reef. Possibly Innsmouth? No coast line evident, no town lights. Also no ship. Rise from below, beside reef. Devil Reef? Even hybrids ought not to be able to swim too far without some resting-place. Possibly coast foreground, out of sight.

“Nov. 17, ' 21. Utterly alien landscape. Not of earth so far as I know. Black heavens, some stars. Crag of porphyry or some similar substance. Foreground a deep lake. Hali? In five minutes the water began to ripple where something rose. Facing inward. A titanic aquatic being, tentacled. Octopoid, but far, far larger—ten—twenty times larger than the giant Octopus apollyon of the west coast. What was its neck was alone easily fifteen rods in diameter. Could not risk chance of seeing its face and destroyed the star.

“Jan. 4, ' 22. An interval of nothingness. Outer space? Planetary approach, as were I seeing through the eyes of some being coming in to an object in space. Sky dark, far stars, but the surface of the planet soon looming close. Coming closer, saw barren landscape. No vegetation, as on the dark star. A circle of worshippers facing a stone tower. Their cries: Iä! Shub-Niggurath!

“Jan. 16, ' 22. Undersea region. Atlantis? Doubtful. A vast, cavernous temple-like structure, broken by depth-charges. Massive stones, similar to

pyramid stones. Steps leading down to black maw below. Deep Ones in background. Movement in darkness of stair-well. A huge tentacle moving up. Far back two liquid eyes, many rods apart. R' lyeh? Fearful at approach of thing from below, and destroyed star.

“Feb. 24, '22. Familiar landscape. Wilbraham country? Rundown farm houses, ingrown family. Foreground, old man listening. Time: evening. Whippoorwills calling in great volume. Woman approaches holding stone replica of star in hand. Old man flees. Curious. Must look up.

“Mar. 21, '22. Unnerving experience today. Must be more careful. Constructed star and spoke the words: Ph' nglui mglw' nafh Cthulhu R' lyeh wgah' nagl fhtagn. Opened immediately on huge shantak in foreground. Shantak aware, and at once moved forward. I could actually hear its claws. Managed to break the star in time.

“Apr. 7, '22. I know now they will actually come through if I am not careful. Today the Tibetan landscape, and the Abominable Snowmen. Another attempt made. But what of their masters? If the servants make the attempt to transcend time and space, what of Great Cthulhu–Hastur–Shub-Niggurath? I intend to abstain for a while. Shock profound.”

Nor did he again turn to whatever had been his odd pursuit until early the next year. Or, at least, so his notes indicate. An abstention from his obsessive preoccupation, followed once more with a period of brief indulgence. His first entry was just short of a year later.

“Feb. 7, '23. There seems now no doubt but that there is a general awareness of the door. Very risky to look in at all. Safe only when landscape is clear. And, since one never knows upon what scene the eye will turn, the risk is all the more grave. Yet I hesitate to seal the opening. I constructed the star, as usual, spoke the words, and waited. For a while I saw only the familiar southwestern American landscape, at the hour of evening–bats, owls, night-prowling kangaroo rats and wildcats. Then out of one of the caves, came a Sand-Dweller–rough-skinned, large-eyed, large-eared, with a horrible, distorted resemblance to the Koala bear facially, though his body had an appearance of emaciation. He shambled toward the foreground,

manifestly eager. Is it possible that the door makes this side as visible to them as they are to me? When I saw that he was heading straight for me, I destroyed the star. All vanished, as usual. But later—the house filled with bats! Twenty-seven of them! I am no believer in mere coincidence!”

There occurred now another hiatus, during which my cousin wrote cryptic notes without reference to his visions or to the mysterious “star” of which he had written so often. I could not doubt that he was the victim of hallucinations inspired, no doubt, by his intensive study of the material in the books he had assembled from all corners of the world. These paragraphs were in the nature of substantiation, though they were in essence an attempt to rationalize what he had “seen.”

They were interspersed with newspaper clippings, which my cousin obviously sought to relate to the myth-pattern to which he was so devoted—accounts of strange happenings, unknown objects in the heavens, mysterious disappearances into space, curious revelations regarding hidden cults, and the like. It was painfully patent that Wilbur had come to believe intensely in certain facets of the ancient primitive credos, particularly that there were contemporary survivals of the hellish Ancient Ones and their worshippers and followers; and it was this, more than anything else, that he was trying to prove. It was as if he had taken the writings printed or written in the old books he possessed and, accepting them for literal truth, was trying to adduce the weight of evidence from his own time to add to that from the past. It was true, there was a disturbing element of similarity between the ancient accounts and many of those my cousin had managed to find, but these were doubtless capable of being explained as coincidence. Cogent as they were, I reproduced none of them before sending them to Miskatonic Library for the Akeley Collection, but I remember them vividly—and all the more so in the light of that unforgettable climax to my somewhat aimless inquiry into my cousin Wilbur’s preoccupation.

### III

I would never have known about the “star” if it had not been accidentally brought to my attention. My cousin had written repeatedly about “making,” “breaking,” “constructing” and “destroying” the star as a necessary adjunct to his illusions, but this reference was utterly meaningless to me and would perhaps have remained so had I not chanced to see in the slanting light across the floor of the gable room the faint marks which seemed to outline a five-pointed star. This had been invisible before, because it had been covered by a large rug; but the rug had got moved in the course of my packing the books and papers to be taken to Miskatonic University Library, and thus my sight of the markings was an accident.

Even then it did not dawn upon me that these markings represented a star. Not until I finished my work with the books and papers and could push back the rug from the entire center of the floor did the whole design present itself. I saw then that it was a star of five points, decorated with various ornamental designs, the whole of sufficient size to permit its being drawn from within it. This then, I knew at once, was the explanation for a box of chalk for which I had previously found no reason for being in my cousin’s favorite room. Pushing books, papers, and all else out of the way, I went for the chalk, and set about faithfully copying the star design and all the decorations within the star. It was clearly meant for some kind of cabalistic drawing, and it was equally evident that the performer was required to sit within its outlines.

So, having completed the drawing in accordance with the impress left by frequent reconstructions, I sat within the design. Quite possibly I expected something to happen, though I was still puzzled by my cousin’s references in his notes as to the breaking of the design each time he thought himself menaced, for, as I recalled rituals, it was the breaking of such designs which brought about the danger of psychic invasion. However, nothing whatsoever took place, and it was not until several minutes had passed that I remembered “the words.” I had copied them, and now I rose to find my



copy, and, finding it, returned with it to the star and gravely spoke the words—

“Ph’ nglui mglw’ nafh Cthulhu R’ lyeh wgah’ nagl fhtagn.”

Instantly a most extraordinary phenomenon took place. I was seated, facing the round window of clouded glass in the south wall, so that I saw everything that happened. The cloudiness vanished from the glass, and I found myself, to my astonishment, looking upon a sunbaked landscape—though the hour was night, a few minutes past nine o’ clock of a late summer evening in the state of Massachusetts. Yet the landscape which appeared through the glass was one which could not have been found anywhere in New England—an arid country, a land of sandy rocks, of desert vegetation—which was spare—of caverns, and, in the background, of snowcapped mountains—just such a landscape as had been described more than once in my cousin’ s cryptic notes.

Upon this landscape I gazed in the utmost fascination, my mind in turmoil. Life seemed to be going on in the landscape to which I looked, and I picked out one aspect after another—the rattlesnake crawling sinuously along, the sharp-eyed hawk soaring overhead—which enabled me to see that the hour was not long before sundown, for the reflection of the sunlight on the hawk’ s breast was indicative—the Gila monster, the roadrunner—all those prosaic aspects of the American southwest I saw. Where was the scene, then? Arizona? New Mexico?

But the events of that alien landscape kept on without reference to me. The snake and Gila monster crawled away, the hawk plummeted downward and came up with a snake in his talons, the roadrunner was joined by another. And the sunlight drew away, making of that land a face of great beauty. Then, from the mouth of one of the largest caverns came the bats. They came flowing from that black maw by the thousands in an endless stream, and it seemed to me that I could hear their chittering. How long it took for them to fly out into the gathering twilight, I do not know. They had hardly gone before something more made its appearance—a kind of human being, rough of skin, as if the desert’ s sand had been encrusted upon the surface of his body, with abnormally large eyes and ears. He seemed to be emaciated,

with ribs showing through his skin, but what was particularly repellent was the look of his face—for he resembled an Australian toy bear called the Koala. And at this, I remembered what my cousin had called these people—for there were others following that first, some of them female. Sand-Dwellers!

They came from the cavern, blinking their great eyes, but soon they came in greater haste, and scattered to both sides, crouching behind the bushes—then, little by little, an incredible monster made its appearance—at first a probing tentacle, then another, and presently half a dozen cautiously exploring the cave's mouth. And then, from out of the darkness of the cavern's well, an eldritch head showed dimly. Then, as it thrust forth, I almost screamed aloud in horror—for the face was a ghastly travesty on everything civilized; it rose from a neckless body which was a mass of jelly-like flesh, rubbery to the eye, and the tentacles which adorned it took rise from that area of the creature's body which was either its lower jaw or what passed for a neck.

Moreover, the thing had intelligent perception, for from the first it seemed to be aware of me. It came sprawling out of the cavern, its eyes fixed upon me, and then began to move with unbelievable rapidity toward the window over that rapidly darkening landscape. I suppose I had no real concept of the danger in which I sat, for I watched with rapt attention, and only when the thing was blotting out all the landscape, when its tentacles were reaching toward the gable window—and through it!—that I recognized the paralysis of fright.

Through it! Was this then, the ultimate illusion?

I remember breaking through the icy fear which held me long enough to pull off a shoe and hurl it with all my might at the glass; and at the same time, recalled my cousin's frequent references to breaking the star; so I slouched forward and wiped part of the design into oblivion. Even as I heard the sound of shattering glass, I slipped into merciful darkness.

I know now what my cousin knew.

If only I had not waited quite so long, I might have been spared that knowledge, I might have continued able to believe in illusion, in hallucination. But I know that the clouded glass of the gable window was a potent door into other dimensions—to alien space and time, an opening to landscapes Wilbur Akeley sought at will, a key to those hidden places of the earth and the star spaces where the followers of the Ancient Ones—and the Old Ones themselves!—lurk forever, awaiting their time to rise again. The glass from Leng—which might have come out of the Hyades, for I never learned where my cousin had got it—was capable of being rotated within its frame, it was not subject to mundane laws save only that its direction was altered by the earth's movement on its axis. And if I had not shattered it, I would have loosed upon the earth indeed a scourge from other dimensions, unwittingly called forth by my ignorance and curiosity.

For I know now that the models from which my cousin drew the illustrations, however crude, among his notes, were alive, and not the product of his imagination. The final, crowning proof is indisputable. The bats I found in the house when I regained consciousness might have come in through the broken window. That the clouded glass had cleared might have been an optical illusion—if it were not that I know better. For I know beyond doubt that what I saw was not the product of my feverish fancy, because nothing could demolish that final damning proof which I found near the shattered glass on the floor of the gable room—the cut tentacle, ten feet in length, which had been caught between dimensions when the door had been shut against that monstrous body to which it belonged, the tentacle no living savant could identify as belonging to any known creature, living or dead, on the face or in the subterranean depths of the earth!